United Nations

A/C.2/52/SR.19

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
11 November 1997

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 27 October 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. de Rojas (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Venezuela)

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97-82316 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 97: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation *(continued)* (A/52/92, A/52/112, A/52/139, A/52/153-S/1997/384, A/52/163, A/52/217-S/1997/507, A/52/284, A/52/318, A/52/432, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460)

(a) Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership *(continued)* (A/52/413, A/52/425)

(b) Implementation of the programme of action for the least developed countries for the 1990s *(continued)* (A/52/279, A/52/413; A/C.2/52/3)

1. **Mr. Al-Khalifa** (Bahrain) said that the adoption of the Agenda for Development confirmed the importance of the role of the United Nations in the field of economic and social development. However, the efforts of the United Nations must be accompanied by efforts on the part of both the developed and the developing countries. The developed countries should strive to create an environment that would help developing countries meet their development objectives by transferring technology, eliminating protectionist restrictions and tariff barriers, opening up markets, and transferring capital to those countries. The developing countries, for their part, should ensure sound planning and work seriously at establishing viable economic structures.

2. Bahrain had made considerable efforts to create a favourable climate for foreign investment in order to promote its economic activities and achieve sustainable development. If global development was to take root, the United Nations must play an important role through the work of its specialized agencies. The international community must therefore give the Organization the necessary support in order for it to fulfil its role in building a world of prosperity and stability, which would be beneficial to all.

3. **Mr. Ageyev** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan had embarked on the path of fundamental economic and social reform. Its development strategy to the year 2030 gave top priority to economic growth based on the development of a market economy and a high level of foreign investment. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the continuation of the dialogue on the social and economic impact of globalization called for in General Assembly resolution 51/174.

4. The recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Agenda for Development had been a significant step towards the development of a theoretical basis for the ongoing movement towards a world community. In view of the almost universal trend towards greater economic openness and integration, Kazakhstan had made efforts to create a favourable climate for foreign investment and capital.

5. The Agenda for Development also stressed that regional economic integration and cooperation helped to increase market and investment possibilities and stimulate economic growth. Kazakhstan was actively involved in the regional integration process and had formed a union along with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, in order to create a unified economic area. It also participated in the customs union within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Its ultimate goal was to become a full member of the major global economic unions and organizations.

6. **Mr. Abdellatif** (Egypt) said that the General Assembly should reach an agreement during its current session on how to enhance the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development and its framework. It was unrealistic to keep drafting resolutions calling for such a dialogue while constantly postponing the dialogue.

7. The changes that were occurring in the world had helped to narrow the gap between developed and developing countries at the level of economic and social policies. At the level of international economic activities, trade flows between the north and the south had increased. The work of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and recent major international conferences had permitted the international community to reach a consensus on various development issues. Such consensus could be used as a basis for starting a dialogue on development issues in order to promote common interests. Egypt therefore endorsed the renewal of the dialogue which would help to lay down a framework for common understanding.

8. **Mr. Mor** (Israel) said that international support measures were of critical importance to the future growth and development of the least developed countries. Israel had been engaged in development and international cooperation since 1958, and had created a special division for international cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, known as MASHAV, for that purpose. MASHAV assisted countries to overcome their economic and social problems through technical training programmes and the transfer of appropriate technology. Such training programmes did not attempt to impose any specific model of development, but rather encouraged trainees to find their own solutions and to adapt them to the specific circumstances of their countries. MASHAV operated through on-the-spot courses, short-term and long-term

consultations and trilateral research programmes, and tried to tailor courses to the development priorities of the recipient countries.

9. Israel was engaged in such programmes because it felt that, as a developing nation which had made impressive progress since achieving statehood, it had much to share with other developing countries. The resumption of the Middle East peace process had led to both the establishment and renewal of diplomatic ties with many States. Currently, MASHAV was cooperating with 143 countries, including many Middle Eastern States, thus serving as a bridge between the peoples of the region.

10. On the eve of the twenty-first century, the main challenges to mankind were hunger, thirst, poverty and major ecological problems. Such issues were reflected in the new policy orientations of Israel's technical cooperation programme. In order for development aid to achieve its primary goal of long-term improvement, programmes must be both financially viable and have a management structure that was committed to sustainable development at all levels — central and local governments, as well as public and private enterprises. Moreover, to achieve genuine development, countries must have trained human resources.

11. MASHAV, which remained committed to the universal goal of human resources development and institution-building, had given high priority to multilateral activities, and had made concerted efforts to increase collaboration with international organizations. In that connection, Israel had signed multilateral agreements with the Palestinian Authority, Luxembourg and Morocco relating to an agricultural project in the Gaza Strip, while agreements had been signed between MASHAV and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on development cooperation and institution-building programmes.

12. **Mr. Powles** (New Zealand) said that New Zealand supported ongoing efforts to engage developing and developed countries in a genuine dialogue on international cooperation for development. The need for an open exchange of ideas was even more critical now as globalization increased the interdependence of all nations. The Agenda for Development was the most comprehensive consensus United Nations document covering the entire range of development issues. It formed a useful basis on which a more efficient and effective United Nations operation in the field of development could be built. His country was committed to playing its part in achieving an outcome of the Agenda for Development that was satisfactory to all parties.

13. However, the ability of countries to participate in a meaningful way should not be overtaxed by overloading the development agenda. Indeed, careful thought should be given to the best way of focusing the international community's collective energies. New Zealand did not wish to reduce the importance of the international development dialogue by spreading the issue across too many forums where it could not be given proper attention. In that spirit, it would like to see a coordinated consideration of development issues which maximized the impact of discussions.

14. **Mr. Kebede** (Ethiopia), referring to General Assembly resolution 50/103, expressed concern that the development partners were far from meeting their commitments to support the efforts of the least developed countries. Indeed, the developed countries' ratio of official development assistance (ODA) to gross national product (GNP) had hit its lowest point in 1996. Resource flows to the least developed countries had remained stagnant in current dollar terms through the 1990s and had diminished in real terms. The situation was not any better for the United Nations system. The funds and programmes were experiencing a shortage of resources needed to undertake development projects and programmes in the least developed countries. Not only should the overall amount of ODA be increased but the quality and effectiveness of assistance to the least developed countries should also be enhanced. External finance should be channelled as a matter of priority to major investment programmes in physical infrastructure and social services, which were necessary for the least developed countries to attract substantial private investment. The least developed countries also needed the active support of non-traditional donors.

15. The external indebtedness of least developed countries also continued to inhibit growth and to undermine prospects for private capital inflows. Partial debt relief measures had not been enough to remove the debt overhang of those countries.

16. As for external trade, the least developed countries' share in the benefits of globalization had been insignificant. Their foreign trade situation had deteriorated at a time when they had engaged in structural adjustment programmes and policy reforms. The structural constraints must be tackled systematically. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the high-level meeting on integrated initiatives for least developed countries scheduled for the end of October 1997. It viewed that meeting as part of a new proactive

international effort to accelerate the integration of the least developed countries into the global trading system. The meeting should be followed by an appropriate programme of activities which would bring together the major agencies, donors, interested Governments and the least developed countries to maintain the current momentum and to review, monitor and follow up the proposals emanating from the high-level meeting.

17. Although the development of the least developed countries was an ethical imperative for the international community, it required commitment and resolve on both sides. Since the international community and the least developed countries would need to embark on a further review of the Programme of Action in the year 2000, it was imperative for the General Assembly to put in place a preparatory process for that review at the current session.

18. **Mr. Al-Hamaimidi** (Iraq) said that in order for the developing countries to be able to take advantage of the new economic climate the obstacles barring their access to world trade must be lifted. Indeed, the international community must identify measures to reduce the marginalization of the developing countries and to usher in a new era of cooperation between developing and developed countries.

19. The dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership should cover all aspects of the world economy. In that regard, countries must refrain from using coercive political measures and embargoes against developing countries for embargoes and blockades were not compatible with the principles of world trade and of WTO. Moreover they could inflict serious damage on the countries surrounding the targeted State. In order for the dialogue to be truly productive, there must be genuine political will to address all areas, including external financing, technology and investments. His delegation was satisfied with the consensus arrived at by the Agenda for Development aimed at achieving a genuine and more efficient economic partnership.

20. **Mr. Ayubi** (Afghanistan) said that the least developed countries were being further marginalized from the processes of globalization and liberalization which were shaping the world economy. The reduced flow of the development resources to those countries, their high level of external indebtedness and the decline in their already marginal share of world trade seriously threatened the sustainability of their domestic reforms.

21. The ravages of war, combined with escalating interference and armed aggression against his country had had a devastating effect on its economy; as a result, the people were living in absolute poverty. Moreover, the presence of more than 10 million landmines posed a serious obstacle to rehabilitation and reconstruction. Urgent measures were required to stem the crisis and set his country on the road to sustainable growth. His delegation therefore appealed to the international community, States, international organizations and the international financial institutions to give priority to the urgent implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and to address the particular needs and problems of his country.

22. **Mr. Chang Beom Cho** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation attached particular importance to agenda item 97 (a). It welcomed the timely adoption of the Agenda for Development, in particular, its call for a renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership. A consensus should be reached at the current session of the General Assembly on the dates, modalities and themes of the high-level dialogue called for in General Assembly resolution 51/174. Although his delegation considered the suggestions by the Secretary-General (A/52/425) concerning the theme of the dialogue to be a useful basis for discussion, it believed that it might be more appropriate to begin with a broader theme, such as the challenges and opportunities of globalization. His delegation was flexible and was prepared to join in the consultations through which the President of the General Assembly would seek the consensus of Member States.

23. With regard to agenda item 97 (b), his delegation welcomed the recent improvements in the economic performance of many of the least developed countries, many of which were introducing structural reforms and were striving to contribute to the development partnership. The international community should do everything in its power to support the still fragile recovery of the economies of the least developed countries. His delegation welcomed the recent recommendation of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) regarding the holding of a third United Nations conference on the least developed countries at the end of the current decade. It also welcomed the convening by the World Trade Organization of a high-level meeting on integrated initiatives to improve access of the least developed countries to international markets.

24. His country was doing what it could to assist the least developed countries. It was about to grant preferential duty-free access to various export items that were of major interest to such countries. Since its establishment in 1991, the Korean International Cooperation Agency had allocated 22.4 per cent of its aid to the least developed countries, and

his Government was expanding its development support in Africa, which was home to nearly two thirds of the world's least developed countries. His country was determined to continue its active contribution to the global partnership for development.

25. **Mr. Gehlot** (India), speaking on agenda item 97 (a), said that the adoption of the Agenda for Development provided the opportunity to energize deliberations on international development cooperation by focusing efforts on the implementation of the various frameworks elaborated following the major international conferences held in recent years. The renewed dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership should focus on themes that were at the cutting edge of international economic relations. Organizational or other reasons should not be allowed indefinitely to delay the renewal of the dialogue which, ideally, should be held under United Nations auspices. The United Nations also could consider promoting such dialogue between developed and developing countries in additional ways, for example, through dialogue between the group of seven major industrialized countries and the Group of 77, or between the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Summit-level Group for South-South Consultation.

26. **Mr. Reshetnyak** (Ukraine) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement on agenda item 97 (a) made by the delegation of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and shared the approach of the European Union to the anticipated renewed dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation. The Agenda for Development reflected the broad consensus on a wide range of problems relating to the global economy, social issues and environmental protection, as well as on the decisive role the United Nations should play in those areas. Accordingly, in preparing the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership, it was important to bear in mind the spirit and letter of the Agenda, the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, the results achieved in other United Nations forums concerned with development and the experience gained in earlier negotiations. The dialogue should be conducted with broad participation by the Bretton Woods institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and representatives of major groups in civil society; and delegations should focus on key issues of interest to all parties.

27. The views and approaches to the modalities and themes for the renewed dialogue set out in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/425) should be taken into account by the President of the General Assembly in his consultations with Member States, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 51/174.

28. **Mr. Kapanga** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement by the representative of Bangladesh in his capacity as coordinator of the group of least developed countries. At a time when the developing countries were facing unprecedented economic problems, the United Nations must adapt to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Peace, freedom and stability were indispensable to development and no country was safe so long as tensions existed anywhere in the world.

29. After more than 32 years of a dictatorship which had devastated the country, the new Government was endeavouring to restore the authority of the State, rebuild basic infrastructure and the economy, guarantee the security of individuals and property and protect fundamental freedoms. He urged the international community to support his Government's efforts to establish new democratic institutions and protect human rights.

30. Although development should be viewed as a partnership among nations, each country was responsible for its own development. His Government favoured regional and South-South cooperation and believed that special emphasis should be placed on promoting trade and productive investments, with a view to the transfer of appropriate modern technologies. It would spare no effort to improve its bilateral and multilateral relations with all its partners. The United Nations system had a key role to play in helping his country establish conditions conducive to sustainable development.

31. On the question of refugees, he emphasized that his Government bore no responsibility for the problems which continued to take a very heavy toll in human, material and ecological terms and called for the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 49/24 on special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda.

32. He reiterated his delegation's support for the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s and called for the full implementation of the specific provisions for the least developed countries, including the Marrakesh ministerial decisions in favour of the least developed countries and the net food-importing developing countries. The least developed countries were poorly equipped to compete in international markets. His delegation also urged the expansion of preferential tariff schemes with a view to incorporating all the major exports of the least developed countries in commodity agreements. It supported the reduction or elimination of tariffs on items

still subject to high tariffs and encouraged further support for the efforts of the least developed countries to diversify their exports and to improve market access for their exports.

33. His country had renewed its contacts with the Bretton Woods institutions and looked forward to the implementation of measures to enable it to achieve sustainable economic development. It hoped that the debt renegotiation process would alleviate its commercial and multilateral debt burden sufficiently to enable it both to honour its external commitments and to guarantee the fundamental rights of the Congolese people, who had been impoverished by years of dictatorship.

34. **Mr. Zarie-Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the time was right for the international community to address the hopes and expectations for a new global partnership towards a better, more prosperous world for all. The adoption of the Agenda for Development, which stressed the link between peace and development, represented a very important step forward in that process.

35. There was general agreement, at least on a theoretical level, that development required both a national and an international component in order to succeed. Such factors as trade, market access, transfer of technology and finance were recognized as essential to the sustainable development process. The international community also agreed in principle that cooperation was essential to success, but the current challenge was to translate those agreements into policies and programmes.

36. With regard to possible future themes for dialogue, referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/425), in the view of his delegation, the main objective of that dialogue had always been to promote genuine partnership on macroeconomic issues, but many of the themes referred to in the current and previous reports seemed to have a different focus. His delegation also believed that it was preferable for the high-level dialogue called for in General Assembly resolution 51/174 to take place during the fifty-second session.

37. In conclusion, his delegation believed that the Secretary-General had an important role to play by encouraging all countries to engage in the dialogue and by facilitating their efforts. That would be a practical step towards placing development at the centre of United Nations activities.

38. **Mr. Upadhyay** (Nepal) noted that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (A/52/279) gave a graphic account of the situation of the least developed countries and called for international support measures, financial, technical and commercial, to prevent those countries from sliding further into despair.

39. Nepal was convinced that foreign direct investment could not be a substitute for official development assistance for some time to come. It looked forward to a successful outcome from the high-level meeting on the least developed countries currently taking place in Geneva. He noted that, at a recent UNDP-sponsored conference on the multilateral trading system and the least developed countries it had been agreed that capacity-building should be a priority area of assistance to such countries. In order to be integrated into the globalization process, the least developed countries needed to build the capacity to comply, negotiate and compete.

40. Nepal had been pursuing liberal economic policies with the cooperation of international financial institutions and was consolidating its commitment to democratic values and human rights. Despite additional physical and geographical handicaps and resource constraints, it had faithfully abided by its commitments. The international community should do what it could to improve conditions for the people of least developed countries like Nepal which were making their best efforts.

41. **Mr. Effendi** (Indonesia) said that, in order to strengthen international economic cooperation and partnership, there was no alternative to constructive dialogue based on mutual interests and benefits, shared responsibilities and genuine interdependence. Although his delegation stood ready to discuss any of the themes for dialogue proposed in the report, prevention and management of emergencies, post-conflict peace-building or "uncivil" society, in its view, the most important issue was the need to garner the political will to address the core issues of development. Inclusiveness was another very important element of such a dialogue.

42. With regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, international policy measures were still of critical importance in supporting those countries' own efforts to overcome their problems. Dialogue to foster a spirit of partnership was also essential.

43. In conclusion, his delegation was ready to engage in the first dialogue on the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications.

44. **Ms. Mphutlane** (Lesotho) said that it was clear that most developed countries had failed to meet their official

development assistance commitments under the 1990 Paris Declaration. For their part, the efforts of the least developed countries had been limited by inadequate financial resources, technical and absorptive capacity, limited local entrepreneurial talent, local financial markets, rudimentary industrial sectors and small private sectors.

45. Lesotho was currently implementing its sixth national development plan and had instituted several structural adjustment programmes. It had taken advantage of the UNDP donor round table process, which it considered to have maximum impact as a forum for donor-recipient dialogue and resource mobilization.

46. While the least developed countries were beginning to reap the rewards of the sometimes painful structural adjustment programmes they had implemented, they had made little headway in reducing poverty. That was due in part to the fact that women, a major factor in both agriculture and business, did not have the necessary economic power to enable them to propel the engine of growth. In order to improve the living conditions in the least developed countries: resources must be made available for development, people and women, in particular, must be empowered, poverty alleviation must be made a primary objective, the rules of globalization must be made more favourable to the least developed countries, and the international community must be willing to provide emergency assistance to countries in special situations.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.